



## CHILDREN'S ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH & PROTECTION ADVISORY COUNCIL

March 16, 2016

The Honorable Anne Healey  
Chair, Rules and Executive Nominations  
House Office Building, Room 150  
Annapolis, MD 21401

The Honorable Joan Carter Conway  
Chair, Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs  
Miller Senate Office Building, 2 West  
Annapolis, MD 21401

**RE: SUPPORT House Bill 1524 and Senate Bill 1150 - *Primary and Secondary Education - Computer Health and Safety Guidelines and Procedures***

Dear Delegate Healey and Senator Conway:

The Children's Environmental Health & Protection Advisory Council (CEHPAC) respectfully submits this letter in **SUPPORT** of **House Bill 1524 and Senate Bill 1150 *Primary and Secondary Education - Computer Health and Safety Guidelines and Procedures***. These bills both address the issue of computer health and safety guidelines and procedures in schools in Maryland.

The Council notes that a number of health concerns have been raised regarding children's use of computers. Children can experience the same symptoms as adults from poor lighting, glare, and improperly set up workstations, but they may be more susceptible to these problems due to limited self-awareness of their symptoms, an acceptance of blurred vision from a refractive error, reduced blinking leading to excessive eye dryness, or in some cases potentially vision problems of which their parents were not previously aware.<sup>1</sup> Other health concerns have been raised and are still under investigation.

The Council, after review of available data, believes there is sufficient evidence to justify the development of health and safety guidelines for the use of computers in schools in Maryland.

CEHPAC seeks to identify environmental hazards that may affect children's health and to recommend solutions to those hazards. CEHPAC's goals were developed in 2001 and are reaffirmed annually. They are to:

- ✓ Ensure that the rules, regulations, and standards of the State protect children from environmental hazards;
- ✓ Educate involved parties regarding the environmental hazards that impact children's health and the means to avoid those hazards; and
- ✓ Enable children in Maryland to grow up in a safe and healthy environment.

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<sup>1</sup> Kozeis N. Impact of computer use on children's vision. Hippokratia. 2009 Oct;13(4):230-1.

In establishing CEHPAC (Md. Code Ann., Health-General §§ 13-501-506), the Maryland General Assembly clearly identified children's environmental health as a priority for the State. HB 1524 and SB 1150 address our concerns regarding the impact to students when using computer devices both in school and at home. CEHPAC has increasingly seen the need to advocate for basic protections for children. HB 1524 and SB 1150 are a means of ensuring that children are not adversely affected by the time they spend using computers for school work, home work or other related activities.

CEHPAC urges the legislature to act favorably on this issue. The opinions of the Council expressed in this letter do not necessarily reflect that of the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene or any other State agency. CEHPAC looks forward to working with the General Assembly on this and other issues, and thanks you for your leadership on this issue.

Sincerely,



Clifford S. Mitchell, MS, MD, MPH  
Chairman, Children's Environmental Health and Protection Advisory Council

cc: House Rules and Executive Nominations Committee  
Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee  
Jed Miller, MD, MPH  
Vice-Chairman, CEHPAC  
CEHPAC Members